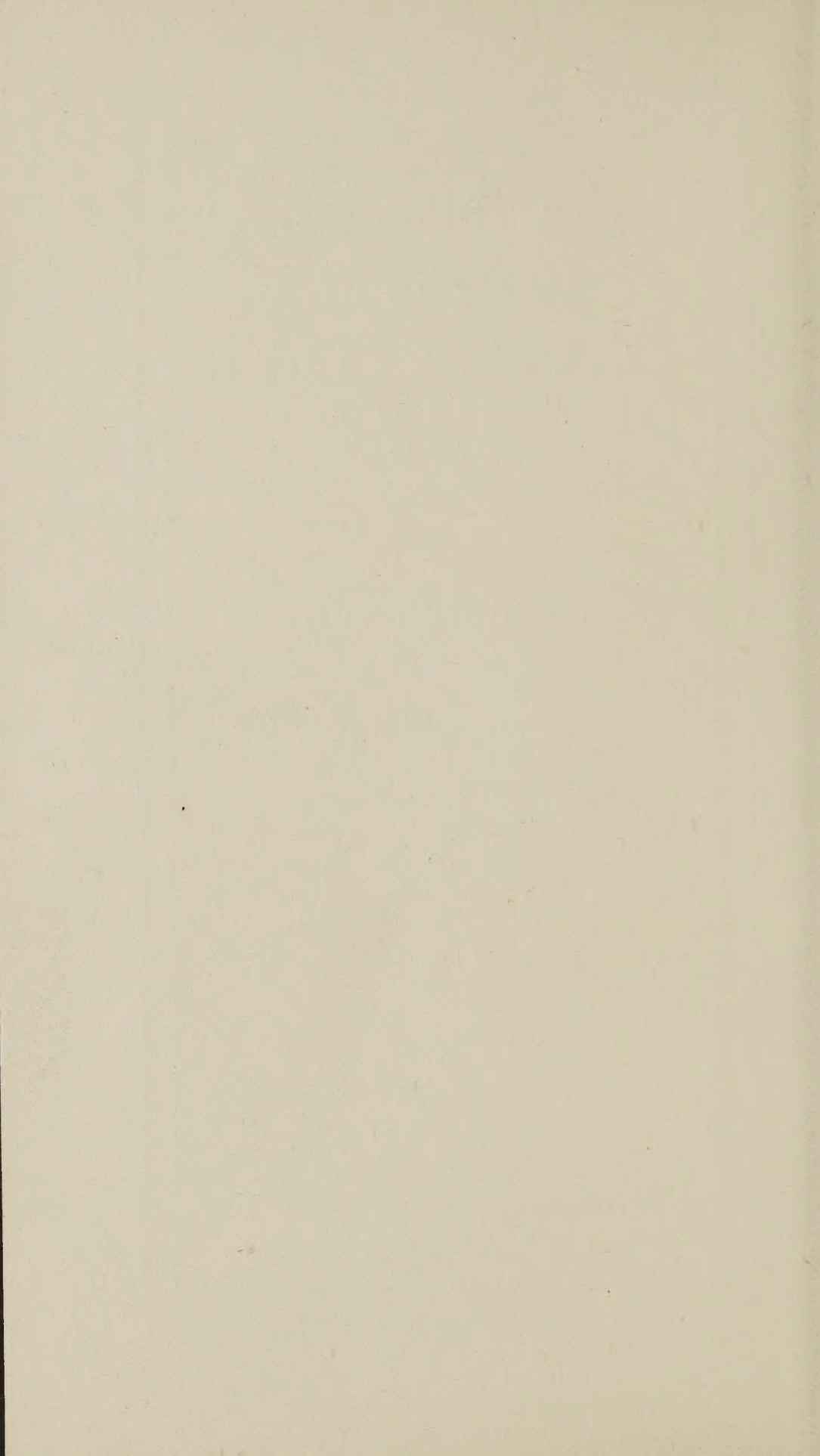


Some Missionary
Methods of a
Presiding Elder's
District

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No.

SOME MISSIONARY METHODS OF A PRESIDING ELDER'S DISTRICT



THE Missionary Campaigns to be described are those of Buffalo District, Genesee Conference, for the years 1903 and 1904. The District is a difficult field in which to secure a liberal support for missions. It confronts in Buffalo a dense foreign population. Methodism there is not financially strong; most of the churches are weak and burdened. There are no large givers. The majority of out-of-town churches are in a territory generally unproductive for Methodism, and are marked with a spirit of conservatism and apathy toward world evangelism. In outlining the work done we do not distinguish between the methods of the two years, but treat both as one.

The District mentioned is not presented as the one leading the Conference in missionary support, for it is outdistanced in proportionate giving by Rochester District. We report progress only, and if any value attaches to this presentation it may be to indicate some possibilities in the culture of stubborn soil.

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The campaign divides naturally into three parts: conventions, a pulpit exchange, literature. The culmination was Easter Sunday,¹ when the offerings were received. The missionary revival was carried on during the month preceding, with the exception of the last week, which was reserved, where churches so elected, for services appropriate to Holy Week.

The Convention work naturally divided into two sections, city and out-of-town, with methods suitable to the radically different conditions. Most of the time was spent in the out-of-town campaign. The keynote was God's trumpet call to the church of this generation to arise and take the world for Christ. The plan, with minor exceptions, was to reach every church on the District. There were, save a few Epworth League gatherings, no group meetings. The Convention went to the people, even to the out appointments of circuits. As many as 29 conventions were held out of town and 23 meetings in the city, that is, 52 conventions and gatherings in 22 days, with a total of more than 200 addresses. Every pastor of the District and a number of laymen were employed as speakers, together with a contribution of able speakers by the Missionary Society. Dr. F. D. Gamewell gave a number of thrilling addresses. Mis-

¹ This day may not be best for a Spring Conference, when the Sunday nearest Thanksgiving or another date might be preferable. One date, however, for the whole District seems essential.

PREPARATION

sionary collections were not taken at the conventions or meetings.

Preparation.—To insure the carrying out of so large a programme preparations began weeks in advance. Separate conferences of city and out-of-town pastors were held in which details were discussed at length and approved; later the presiding elder by stenographic help placed before each pastor by correspondence the complete plan, and kept in touch with all points of the District, that no failure might occur at any meeting. Each speaker was even notified of the hour he must take his train to not fail of connection.

The advertising was generous, about 30,000 pieces being provided. One year it was in the form of a general circular applicable to all the District, giving the dates and speakers for all the meetings. This was to impress the smallest church with the largeness of the movement of which it was a part. This was all looked after from the central office of the presiding elder. Nothing was left to a pastor but to carry out details as directed.

The sum paid by each charge toward the campaign fund covered all their local expenses, including advertising. The result of a central management was that all went smoothly and effectively.

The pulpit exchange, coming not later than the Sunday preceding Palm Sunday, was found most satisfactory when arranged in

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pairs. This, in case of sickness, insured but the breaking of a single link in the plan.

Each pastor was expected to prepare his greatest missionary address. He was not to divide his energies on more than one. The committee expected him to deliver this, in most instances, four times: twice at conventions, once in the pulpit exchange, and, as a climax, to his own people on Palm Sunday.

Three pastors of the District made preparations on Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education work and two others on Church Extension and gave several telling addresses. The out-of-town conventions with few exceptions continued through an afternoon and evening. The presiding elder was at all these gatherings save one. The corps of speakers visiting a church in the afternoon were on the programme for another church in the evening, as two conventions were held daily at places contiguous.

A fine educational exhibit was prepared in duplicate by the Missionary Society in New York, illustrating, by leaflets, booklets, and charts, the League and Sunday school forward movements, latest missionary literature, and the "Station Plan." This covered about fifty running feet and was placed across the front of the church. Charts and maps adorned the walls. A competent man, a pastor, devoted himself continuously to the work of placing and explaining each exhibit. Local talent, save to assist in this, was impracticable.

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A young lady thoroughly conversant with League work traveled over the District, and, in connection with the conventions, met by appointment the several cabinets, inquired into their work, corrected errors, and gave valuable instruction concerning the possibilities of the several departments and forward movements. The new Sunday school missionary programmes were explained in an illustrative address by Miss Hixson, of the Missionary Society. In short, the campaign was educational. It agitated incidentally for one dollar for missions per member and probationer, but chiefly to awaken every department of the church into intelligent, effective missionary activity. Considerable free literature was distributed. Five or six addresses were delivered at each convention. The attendance was good, in many instances large. As a rule, the people who mold the sentiment of the local church were present. The children were much in evidence and quietly attentive.

In one campaign separate and convenient hours of the programme were devoted to the Sunday school children, also to the young people. Programmes for the larger, busier towns were so modified as to command attention and impress the church.

The city campaign was covered in three nights—ten simultaneous meetings on the first night, twelve on the second, and a great mass meeting on the third. These were a marked success. A brilliant array of out-of-town

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speakers, former pastors, and home talent gave to each church two or three addresses. The smaller churches were manned by able men. These twenty-two meetings in two nights were held without a hitch in a single programme; most of the speakers spoke in two churches each night. The presiding elder sat at his 'phone to guard emergencies.

The mass meeting packed the great auditorium of Delaware Avenue Church with the bone and sinew of our city Methodism. For size and quality it was one of the most representative Methodist audiences ever gathered in Buffalo. These meetings left a profound impression and reached thousands of people.

The expenses of the campaign were traveling expenses, correspondence, postage, advertising, and the exhibit. Each pastor, however, contributed his traveling expenses to one day's convention trip, also to the pulpit exchange. The presiding elder's traveling expenses were paid by himself, as he was able to hold a series of Quarterly Conferences. The expenditures were covered by an apportionment to the several churches ranging from five to ten dollars in the out-of-town churches and from two to three times those amounts in some of the city churches. This covered all expenses except the Easter collection envelope.

Each pastor was privileged to take offerings at his convention or meetings to apply on expenses or to raise the amount as he might think

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best. One method was the use of season tickets of admission at ten cents each, good for all the services on the District. A round perforated children's ticket in bright red admitted all children fifteen years of age and under free. These were in great demand, and, being worn at school, days in advance of the conventions, were effective advertising.

Literature.—Correspondence was had with more than forty missionary boards to secure their best leaflets on systematic giving and the spirit of missions. These were carefully culled and a choice assortment sent each pastor to aid in his missionary preparation; also another choice set to each Sunday school to enrich the monthly programme and as samples from which purchases might be made for the children. Personal letters accompanied these packages. Envelopes containing the latest Epworth League literature went by mail to League officers. About six thousand sets of the series of five leaflets issued by the Missionary Society were used, one each Sabbath.

In addition to this an Easter envelope is annually provided as an aid to the collection. It contains an Easter pastoral greeting signed, "Your Pastor," also two leaflets, the one this year a forceful setting forth of the claims of Christian stewardship by a prominent clergyman, the other a story intended to bring home the same truth. In addition to these is a blank pledge ruled for each member of the family, a sample of which is here given:

“Treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt.”

"He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

MISSIONARY COLLECTION

[illegible]

If a family, please to have each member sign on one of the above lines. If the children can but print, let their autographs appear. Write in the baby's name. Do not withhold a gift necessarily small; few will need to go below one dollar each. Many will subscribe a penny a day (\$3.65) each, and many will go beyond that amount. Let all be "as unto the Lord."

NOTE.—One pastor greatly increased his collection by writing in the above lines the names in each family. The envelope should be in the homes of the donors one Sunday in advance, that, at the pastor's suggestion, the family may consult concerning their offering.

The preliminary work being done, the mere laying of the filled-out pledges on the collection plates does not interfere with the Easter or other services.

RESULTS

The intent of the envelope is to reach every family or self-supporting member of the District with attractive missionary literature. This is the more effective as a part of the culmination of the campaign. Also the aim is to secure a contribution from everyone, not merely those present at the service. The pledge card gives specific directions concerning its use, and a committee may call for those cards not reported. An abundance of pledge cards was kept in the seats for three or four subsequent Sundays to remind delinquents.

The pastors order long in advance as many envelopes as each may need. These are sent filled and ready for addressing. The pastor is urged not to cheapen and nullify their effect by handing out in the congregation, but to mail with a one-cent stamp. The ornamental envelope and its motto saves it from the wastebasket. The cost of the envelope and postage is deducted from the missionary collection and seems a most profitable investment.

This year about 6,700 envelopes were used on the District, and more than that number were ordered from the printer by pastors of other Districts, it being understood that no one but the printer selected had any financial interest in the publication. We find that our own reprint of the leaflets used is not without advantage in the matter of size and cost.

Results.—The amount contributed for missions by the Buffalo District in 1902, the year

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preceding the first campaign, was \$5,187, or about 57 cents per member and probationer. In 1903 the amount was \$6,966, or about 75 cents per member and probationer. The increase was \$1,779, or about 34 1-3 per cent.

No marked increase was expected in 1904, the aim being to hold at least the increase of the preceding year with a possible addition of \$500. The increase, however, was \$1,235, making a total of \$8,201, or about 87 cents per member and probationer—an advance over 1902 of \$3,014, or about 54 per cent, or 30 cents per member and probationer, raising the District as ranked among Districts by the Missionary Society from number 327 to number 65. This brings us nearer the good companionship of Rochester District, which properly and serenely holds her place at number 40.

In 1905 for unavoidable reasons no aggressive campaign was held outside a few meetings, the pulpit exchange, and the Easter envelope. The present indications are, however, that the offerings may hold up to last year, which, if true, will encourage us to think that God's people when informed will respond, and that the results of a campaign tend to permanence. Our plan for next year may be a radical departure from what we have tried before. We hope to employ the Silver Bay idea, with emphasis upon a metropolitan center as a basis. We are persuaded that a fullness of time has come when the

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young, introduced by the presiding elder and pastors to those plans for mission study both in the Epworth League and Sunday school, will give a response, in consecration and offering, far beyond that of the adult members of the church, and that from them, more than from any other agency, will come the mightiest inspiration to their seniors. Tangible proof of this was seen in the fact that of the increase in the missionary offering last year on Buffalo District that of the Sunday schools was a marked proportionate advance over the increase in the church.¹

We may notice that the increase resulting from education came wholly from ordinary contributions; no single considerable gift was noted. The society heading the District is a downtown church with almost no wealth and a shifting constituency. In 1903 it contributed for missions \$600; last year a mission study class and the gospel of salvation for the whole world resulted, without pressure, in freewill offerings of that people aggregating \$1,000.

The theory of the missionary campaign as set forth above is, first, that in missionary endeavor a District may be considered as a single pastoral charge on which there may be as

¹ In 1903 the churches of the District increased their offerings over 1902 by 31 per cent, and the Sunday schools by 40 per cent. In 1904 the churches advanced over 1903 by 11 per cent, and the schools 25 per cent. The whole advance for the two years was: churches, 50 per cent; schools, 76 per cent.

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many assistant pastors as churches. In the work of missions the District, and not the church, is the natural unit. Each church works out its part of the District plan emanating from the presiding elder. If the Missionary Society may be likened to a great trunk line, the presiding elder is to furnish terminal facilities. In this he is the proper leader. His position at the head of the District and his intimate relations with pastors and churches tend to turn all toward him as the one about whom the District will rally. He is also recognized as the connecting link between his District and the Missionary Society, he being in vital touch with both. His leadership does not rest upon authority, but upon a fitness born of knowledge of the situation. In the discharge of his missionary responsibility may not the presiding elder visit the Sunday schools and young people's societies as regularly as he does the churches of his District? May he not seek to be an up-to-date encyclopedia of plans and missionary methods applicable to his several schools and Leagues? May not a District feel that for information or initiative in the matter of missions there is no need to look beyond its presiding elder? A presiding elder's District is more pliable than the average individual church; hence the elder whose plans are clear-cut, if energetically applied, may mold his District almost at will into a compact

THE THEORY

and well-drilled corps, fit to take its place in the right wing of God's line of battle.

Second, that pastors who thoroughly prepare a missionary discourse and deliver it several times get on fire.

Third, that the young people and children are the most valuable human asset in the world's conquest for righteousness.

Fourth, that the church is commissioned to evangelize the world, that the Holy Spirit is promised to individuals and churches who recognize and accept this commission; hence a missionary campaign incidentally secures money for missions, but chiefly *it constrains the local church to adjust itself to divine conditions and principles vital to its own life and power.*

Price, 5 cents each

